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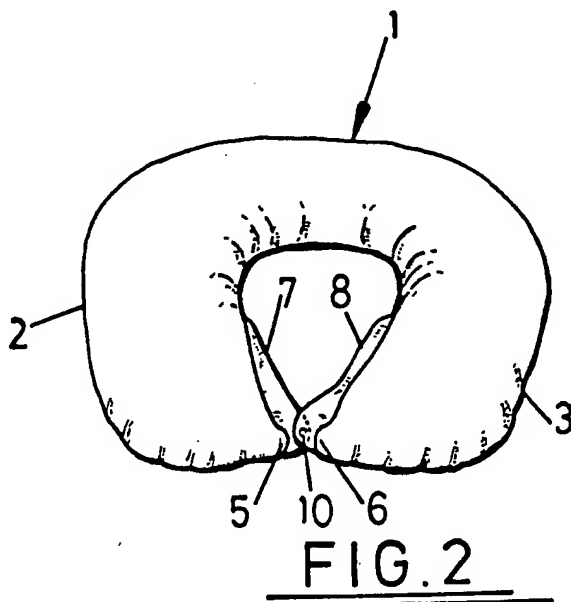
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(58) Field of search
A4M
Selected US specifications from IPC sub-classes
A47C A47G

(54) Inflatable neck pillow

(57) An inflatable neck pillow of generally U-shaped configuration with rear and side portions for providing rear and lateral support respectively to the head of a wearer. The distal ends of the side portions at least in the inflated condition of the pillow are closely adjacent so as to provide support under the chin of a wearer when the pillow is worn.



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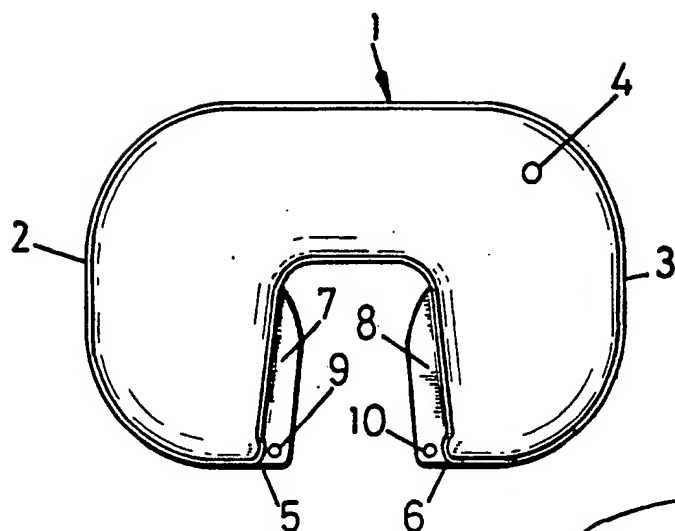


FIG. 1

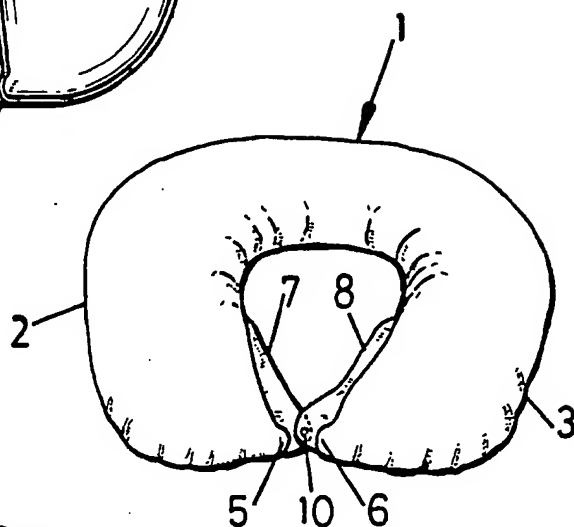


FIG. 2

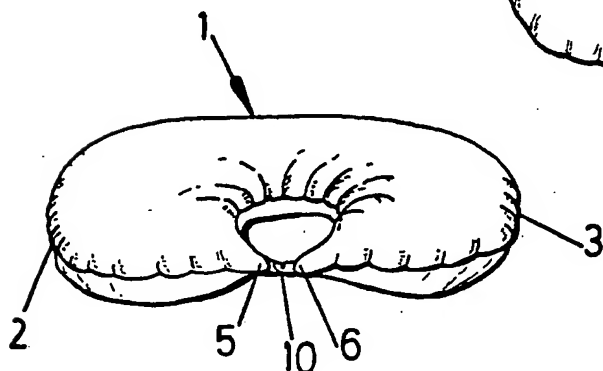


FIG. 3

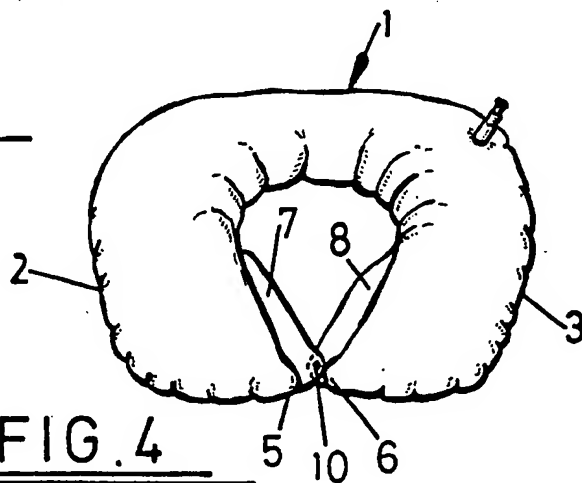


FIG. 4

IMPROVEMENTS IN OR RELATING TO
INFLATABLE NECK PILLOWS

5 This invention relates to inflatable neck pillows.

10 It is known to provide inflatable neck pillows which are adapted to fit around the neck of a seated wearer for example during a car or aeroplane journey in order to support the head in a comfortable position for sleeping. A known neck pillow of this kind is of generally U-shape with (as considered in the position of use) a rear portion extending along the back of the neck of the wearer and side limbs extending forwardly from said rear portion in flanking relationship with the neck.

15 It is a disadvantage of known neck pillows that although they provide the wearer with rear and lateral head support they provide no or only little support under the chin which renders such pillows unsuitable for travellers who tend to sleep with their heads tilted forwards.

20 It is an object of the present invention to obviate or mitigate the aforesaid disadvantage.

25 According to the present invention there is provided an inflatable neck pillow of generally U-shaped configuration with rear and side portions for providing rear and lateral support respectively to the head of a wearer, characterised in that the distal ends of the side portions at least in the inflated condition of the pillow are closely adjacent so as to provide support under the chin of a wearer when the pillow is worn.

30 Preferably, the design is such that in the deflated condition of the pillow said distal ends are relatively far apart, the pillow being so shaped that
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inflation causes said ends to move into said closely adjacent relationship. This is preferably achieved by providing facing corners at said distal ends with rounded protuberances which surprisingly have the required effect.

The invention will now be further described by way of example only with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which :-

Fig. 1 is an underneath plan view of one embodiment of inflatable neck pillow in accordance with the invention, in a deflated condition;

Fig. 2 is a top view of the same pillow when inflated;

Fig. 3 is a corresponding front view, and,

Fig. 4 is a corresponding underneath view.

Referring now to the drawings, it will be apparent from Fig. 1 that in the deflated condition the neck pillow is of generally U-shape with a rear portion 1 connected to side portions 2, 3. The pillow is made from two pieces of rubber or synthetic plastics material (preferably PVC with a suede external finish) having the shape in plan shown in Fig. 1 and edge sealed together by adhesive or welding to provide a tube which lies flat in the deflated condition. A retractable valve 4 is provided for inflating the pillow. The adjacent front corners 5, 6 of the side portions 2, 3 of the hollow tube so formed are shaped as rounded protuberances which surprisingly have the effect during inflation of bringing these corners into close proximity as shown in the subsequent figures.

The adjacent sides of the side portions 2, 3 are provided with integral flaps 7, 8 formed by non-inflatable parts of the pillow. At the front of these flaps, provision is made for fastener means

indicated generally at 9 and 10. The fastener means 9, 10 may be any convenient means such as a press-stud fastener, mutually engaging strips of Velcro (Registered Trade Mark) or other hook-and-pile fabric, or simply two eyelets that can be interconnected by a cord (not shown). As best seen in Figs. 2 and 4 the flaps 7, 8 overlap when the fastener means 9, 10 are engaged. Alternatively and preferably the fastener means may be such that the upper surfaces of the flaps 7, 8 are interconnected in facing relationship thereby causing the flaps to curve downwardly along their length.

As already explained, when the neck pillow is inflated the adjacent distal corners of the side portions 2, 3 move into closely adjacent relationship and in the present example this is achieved by the presence of the protuberances 5, 6. It will be appreciated that even after inflation, when the pillow has the appearance illustrated in Figs. 2 to 4, it is a simple matter for the side portions 2, 3 to be moved manually apart so that the pillow can be fitted around the neck of the wearer. When the wearer of the pillow leans back onto the rear portion 1 the distal ends of the side portions 2, 3 tend to move closer together so as to enhance the chin support. This coupled with the proximity of the distal ends of the side portions 2, 3 results in a greater measure of support under the chin than was previously available with known neck pillows. The protuberances 5, 6 themselves increase the amount of chin support as compared to conventional corners. Such improved support at the front of the head is available irrespective of whether the neck pillow is equipped with the flaps 7, 8 and the fastener means 9, 10. However, the presence of such flaps and

fastener means makes it possible for the side portions 2, 3 to be held in close proximity so as to avoid the possibility that the side portions are spread apart by the head of the wearer tilting forward. Additionally the flaps 7, 8 provide a certain amount of support for the chin region, particularly when they are fastened together.

A further advantage of the fastener means is that they render the neck pillow (which may be provided in a range of sizes) more suitable for use by children since it can be securely fastened in the position of use.

Although the neck pillow has been described for use particularly by travellers, it will be appreciated that it may find a wide variety of additional uses. For example, the pillow may be worn around the neck by elderly persons in the bath to keep their head above water. The pillow may also be used for medical, surgical or curative purposes e.g. in the case of a stiff neck. The neck pillow may also provide a useful cushion for the head e.g., of a sunbather, when it is laid on the ground with the rear portion 1 under the neck and the head in the hollow defined by the rear and side portions 1, 2, 3.

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CLAIMS

1. An inflatable neck pillow of generally U-shaped configuration with rear and side portions for providing rear and lateral support respectively to the head of a wearer, characterised in that the distal ends of the side portions at least in the inflated condition of the pillow are closely adjacent so as to provide support under the chin of a wearer when the pillow is worn.

2. A pillow as claimed in claim 1, wherein said distal ends are relatively far apart in the deflated condition of the pillow, the pillow being so shaped that inflation causes said ends to move into said closely adjacent relationship.

3. A pillow as claimed in claim 2, wherein facing corners at said distal ends are provided with rounded protuberances to give the required effect.

4. A pillow as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein adjacent sides of the side portions are provided with integral flaps formed by non-inflatable parts of the pillow.

5. A pillow as claimed in claim 4, wherein said flaps are provided with fastener means for fastening the front of the flaps together.

6. An inflatable neck pillow, substantially as herein described with reference to the accompanying drawings.